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Designers in the Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fancy Textile Industry: Education, Employment and Exhibition

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Summary

Mid-nineteenth century design reform and design education has generated recent scholarly interest, but much of this is London-focussed and the designers themselves, mostly located in northern industrial towns, or the manufacturers that employed them, are rarely considered. This essay, which has emerged out of a study of the nineteenth-century Scottish printed cotton and woven damask industries, seeks to examine the character of provincial design employment, education and exhibition in two localities – Glasgow and Dunfermline - and in doing so provide an insight to a complex engagement with the processes of textile design. It includes discussion of family participation in textile design and related activities and the advertising for and employment of both freelance and salaried designers is explored. The functioning of design schools in Scotland forms another focus for analysis along with the associated local exhibiting of designs for prizes. Contrast is drawn between the printed cotton industry, which mainly employed in-house designers and the more prosperous linen damask industry, which generated a small group of financially successful and widely celebrated independent studio designers.

Keywords

Design profession; exhibitions; textiles; design education; advertising; family businesses.

According to report in the 1930s, the textile industry was a bigger consumer of design input than any other manufacturing sector, with the largest number of designs originating in studios attached to individual works (42%), followed by a similar per centage from overseas commercial studios and only a relatively small proportion generated by either English commercial studios (13%) or freelance designers (3%). Pevsner, at much the same time, identified variations in practice according to the type of textile produced, with designs for woven fabrics mostly generated in-house and designs for prints, which was the bigger area of production, more likely to be purchased from elsewhere.¹ Certain developments distinct to the early twentieth century differentiated the experience of textile design in the 1930s to what had prevailed in the century before, in particular the growing importance of named designers in textile marketing, which gave better career prospects to in-house employees.² But these contemporary observations on inter-war design offer useful insights that help us to understand the complexities of the earlier industry.³ This essay examines the character of design employment, education and exhibition in Glasgow and Dunfermline, which were major centres of printed cotton and woven linen production, providing an insight to a complex provincial engagement with the processes of textile design at the height of the industry's commercial success and adding a Scottish perspective to a subject that has hitherto been examined mainly with reference to Manchester.⁴

Almost no direct information survives in business records for the names of the designers who worked in the Scottish printed cotton industry. Where information does exist it is simply the fleeting inclusion of a name – such as that of ‘James Lindsay’ who signed one

design in an undated Turkey red pattern book.⁵ Or, from a rare surviving wage book for 1845, mention of four ‘drawers’, meaning ‘pattern drawers’, headed by the highest paid worker in the factory, William Brock, who earned £8 a month.⁶ The lack of records in an industry that relied on its designers reflected their relatively low social status – for designers were mainly men of working class background – their modest levels of training, and the fact that firms relied considerably on the practice of design copying and adaptation, along with purchase of designs from abroad, which was largely organized by business owners traveling abroad⁷ or undertaken by specialist commission agents such as the one who advertised in 1844 –

A COMMERCIAL GENTLEMAN who intends shortly to visit Paris, and the principal Manufacturing Cities of France, would be happy to receive Commissions to procure Patterns for Calico Printers or Manufacturers. The Advertiser will not take Commissions from more than one House in the same line.⁸

Occasionally there is an insight from newspapers to the process of appointing designers as employees, as in 1844 when Graham & McDougal of Ingram Street in Glasgow advertised, ‘PATTERN DRAWER WANTED. A STEADY MAN, of good abilities to Design and Draw Patterns for a Sewed Muslin Warehouse.’⁹ Or, as in 1855 when Alexander Orr Ewing & Co Turkey red dyers in the Vale of Leven, from their Glasgow premises in St Vincent Place, advertised –

WANTED, a DESIGNER of first rate taste and ability practically acquainted with the working of Turkey Red Printed Goods. To a thoroughly competent party liberal encouragement will be offered. To be employed in Town.¹⁰

Similar advertisements appeared from the 1840s to the '70s, sometimes placed in the Glasgow newspapers from as far afield as Manchester and individuals with all of these credentials also advertised themselves as available for work, including Manchester-based men who were willing to relocate to Glasgow. This was a time of significant expansion in the industry with an active labour market for a range of skills including designers, drawers, 'putters-on', cutters and block engravers. But from the 1880's, with mergers, contraction and bankruptcies among cotton firms, the advertising ceased. There was a glut of skilled textile designers on the Glasgow labour market and many moved away or into other employment. In more specialised areas of production, however, such as damask table linen, the industry remained buoyant and demand for good designers could lead to wide advertising, as in 1895 when Erskine Beveridge & Co. of Dunfermline advertised in Belfast for a 'thoroughly qualified designer for linen damasks.'¹¹

A survey of pattern designers listed in the *Glasgow Post Office Directory* also indicates the changing character of the workforce. In 1810 there was just one freelance firm, Cook & Cumming, described as 'pattern drawers', of 8 Princes Street. Ten years later, there were six – again all described as 'pattern drawers' – including John Murphy of 8 Nelson Street, the first of a family of designers for various branches of the Glasgow textile industry who flourished mid-century. In 1830 there were nine, described as 'pattern drawers and print cutters' and by 1840 this had risen to 15 individuals or

partnership firms, with some now including the term ‘designer’ in their titles, reflecting a change of language that doubtless arose in conjunction with contemporary debates on ‘good design’.¹² The 1840s and ‘50s saw the founding in Glasgow of growing numbers of calico and Turkey red printing factories. Indeed, an estimate of 1852 suggested there were 81 textile printing works in Scotland, compared with 120 in Lancashire, and at the same date it was estimated that the British industry provided ‘constant employment’ for 5-600 pattern designers, plus sketch makers for engravers and block cutters.¹³ Most of the estimated 200 based in Scotland are assumed to have been in full time employment, rather than freelancers who advertised in the *Directory*, the latter in 1850 comprising just 34 individuals or firms in Glasgow.

By the 1840s and ‘50s there is evidence of multi-generation family involvement in design, the most significant in Glasgow being the network of small businesses connected with the Murphy family.¹⁴ The head of the family, John Murphy – who first appeared in 1820 – was now listed as J. & A. Murphy, pattern drawer and print cutter of 9 Maxwell Street and there was a Neil Murphy, probably a son, operating as a ‘pattern drawer and agent for Jacquard machines’ at 53 Candlerigg Street. There were also two Mrs Murphy listed, one at 53 Candlerigg running what was described as a ‘muslin and lace printing establishment’ and the other at 9 Maxwell Street, from where she also operated a ‘lace printing establishment’. In 1850 the Glasgow-based Murphy textile clan included A. W. Murphy, ‘print cutter and lithographer, designer for sewed muslin’ and Thomas Murphy, ‘loom pattern designer’. The Murphy family, all living and working in a small area of east-end Glasgow, remained in the same network of businesses through to the 1870s,

when there were *Post Office Directory* entries for Neil and Neil junior and indications of shifting areas of design emphasis towards damask patterns. Pattern designers such as these were men of sufficient status to be listed by the Post Office and their scientific or literary credentials can also be seen in fleeting glimpses offered by newspaper reports, as in the *Glasgow Herald* of October 17 1862, which recorded in a list of ‘Scottish Inventions’ that James Murphy, pattern designer in Glasgow had had a patent ‘sealed’ for ‘improvements in looms.’ This was probably the same individual whose name – James Murphy jun. - appeared in the *Directory* for 1861-2 where he was described as a ‘pattern designer for fancy weaving and calico printing’, living at 63 John Street. The *Directory* for that year also included a James Murphy sen., described as ‘designer for British and Indian fancy harnesses’, the latter term referring to harness looms, of 48 Gordon Street.

The 1840’s to 1860s marked the high point for numbers of independent textile designers in Glasgow, and with the textile industry flourishing, it is not surprising that directories also listed some in connection with their employers, as with Alex Thomson in 1861, described as ‘pattern designer, Dalsholm Printworks’, whose house was at St Mary’s Place, Maryhill, or Peter McArthur, pattern designer with Ingles & Wakefield, whose ‘residence’ was Cottage House, Dyework Road, off Dalmarnock Road. These men were probably the drawing-office foremen for the works and were based, it would seem, at or very near to printing factories. This contrasts with another individual, James Docherty, whose later career is detailed below, described simply as ‘designer’ of 82 West Nile Street (with a house elsewhere), the business address being the city-centre offices of the firm for which he worked, Henry Monteith & Co., whose printworks were at Blantyre to

the south of the city. The 1861 *Directory* included over thirty individuals who worked independently as pattern designers or pattern cutters, including two Frenchmen. A. J. Gandois, ‘manufacturer of ornamental boxes, pattern cards, books etc’ of 14 Dunlop Street, had previously worked in London where he went bankrupt in 1852. He made designs for textile packaging, which was a lucrative specialist area mostly supplied from abroad, and for the Jacquard loom weaving industry, hence the ‘pattern cards’. He seemingly flourished in Glasgow, for when he died in 1868 the sale of his household goods suggested a home and contents of some opulence.¹⁵ Like A. J. Gandois, textile pattern designers were sometimes involved in designing packaging for finished goods for retail. Indeed, making provision for training this sort of designer was highlighted in the late 1840’s by Richard Redgrave, designer and prominent reformer of art education in Britain, as one of the reasons for creating design schools to service the needs of high quality damask producers.

There is another branch of industry connected with design, the trivial nature of which contrasts strangely with its immense amount. It is the paper-bands with which the rolls of linen are tied round, and the boxes in which they are folded. For home consumption, these bands are usually of plain colour, stamped with some gilt ornament; but in preparing linens for the foreign market, the manufacturers attach great importance to the effect of these ligatures; and the rolls are tied either by French ribbons and gold cord, or the paper bands are embossed, pictorially ornamented, and gaily coloured, and sometimes engraved with some popular subject, allusive to the country to which the goods are to be exported.¹⁶

The second Frenchman in 1861 was Jules Berthold, described as ‘teacher of French and designer to calico printers’, living at 124 West Nile Street, close to the city centre offices of a number of Glasgow’s big textile firms. Newspaper advertising for the French classes further described him as Jules Berthold of Paris and it is likely that some of his pupils were textile company clerks and salesmen or commission agents.¹⁷ The last thirty years of the nineteenth century saw cotton printing decline in Glasgow and this was reflected in the designers, whose *Directory* numbers fell to 18 by 1891.

Damask weaving was a small component of the Glasgow textile industry, though strong connections between Glasgow and Northern Ireland, where there was extensive handloom production of fine linen damask, may have meant that the Irish-named Murphy family of freelance designers noted above worked for manufacturers in both places, or for Glasgow merchants who purchased designs for commissioned production by home workers in Ireland. The heart of the Scottish damask industry was the small town of Dunfermline, north of Edinburgh, which was part of a network of towns with a long history of linen manufacture that included Perth and Dundee. The experience of the few designers who worked in fine linen production was different to that of designers for the more extensive printed cotton industry, with the need for technical expertise in weaving – or in understanding how a design was translated to the loom – giving them greater bargaining power in the labour market. Some firms had salaried designers as permanent employees, such as Dunfermline-born W. D. Grandison, who worked for over twenty years as ‘chief designer’ for the Perth firm of John Shields & Co and who, on leaving the firm in 1898, was presented with an inscribed clock in recognition of his ‘artistic skill and

ability.¹⁸ But most designers for the industry seem to have operated independently, maintaining their own small design businesses, often with apprentice designers or other employees.

The most famous of the Scottish damask designers was Joseph Neil Paton (1797-1874), who began his career as a Dunfermline linen weaver and undertook an apprenticeship in bookbinding in Edinburgh before setting up as a textile designer. He was a local celebrity, partly for his prestige as a designer in an industry that brought prosperity to the town, but also because he created a notable antiquarian museum in Dunfermline and founded a Swedenborgian chapel in which he preached. He was employed for a while in the local design school and in the 1850s he was a member of the Edinburgh Aesthetic Society, along with several Edinburgh professors and the influential interior decorator and writer David Ramsay Hay.¹⁹ Paton sold designs to firms throughout Britain whilst maintaining possession of his own intellectual property and when he died the V&A purchased over 725 damask designs from his estate.²⁰ But he was particularly associated with Erskine Beveridge & Co., which was the largest firm in Dunfermline mid century.²¹ All three of his children, Joseph Noel, Waller and Amelia, were apprenticed to their father in his textile design studio in Dunfermline from where the eldest son, Joseph Noel, moved to Glasgow in 1838 to take up a post in the design department with W. Sharp & Co., manufacturers of sewed muslin, where he remained for three years.²² The three Paton children eventually gave up textile design for careers as artists, but some of their designs survive, including one that featured in the Great Exhibition of 1851 that shows a

Scottish antiquarian influence in motifs adapted from seventeenth-century Scottish plaster ceilings. [Fig. 1]

There were other well-known Dunfermline designers working in the linen damask industry, such as James Balfour in the 1840s and '50's. His work included a design showing the Duke of Wellington on horseback, for tablecloth and napkins, which was manufactured at the handloom factory of W. Kinnis & Co. for the major firm of Edinburgh drapers, P. & R. Wright.²³ Balfour also designed the celebrated 'Crimean Hero Tablecloth', which included portrait medallions of military and royal figures and was manufactured by D. Dewar, Son & Sons for sale in London.²⁴ Though Balfour sold to several firms, he also, like Paton, maintained a close relationship with a major employer, in this case Dewars, who owned the second largest works in Dunfermline.²⁵ Linen weavers using handloom techniques were long associated with fine design and unlike other areas of the textile industry which went into decline from the 1870s, the production of decorated table and bed linen was sustained by a buoyant institutional and private elite family market from the 1830s through to the end of the century. It was also, unlike other areas of Scottish output where traditional Indian designs predominated, subject to domestic fashion and demand for novelty, which inevitably made work for designers.

It would appear that taste in the matter of table linen changes as frequently as taste in matters of dress, and that the favourite design of to-day may be a drug in the market next month. At one time a stately classical style is in vogue, at another nothing but florid Italian will sell, and with the next change perhaps the public

taste may be met by a bit of modern device. Sometimes the centre of the cloth is filled with elaborate work, and the boarder treated in a simple way. Again, the centre is plain, or dotted over with leaves, and the boarder is composed of a broad band of flowers etc.²⁶

DESIGN Schools

Most textile designers in provincial industry were of artisan or working class background and came to their occupations through apprenticeships, often involving training with a close family member. But Scotland also had a long history of formal design training for the improvement of manufacturing, going back to 1760 when the government-funded Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Manufactures and Fisheries founded a small drawing school in Edinburgh, which was loosely connected with the University.²⁷ A few years before, the short-lived Foulis Academy at Glasgow University was also established in part to bring improvements to textile design and the art of engraving.²⁸ The larger and more successful body in Edinburgh, which had a branch in nearby Dunfermline, reflected the geographical focus of fancy textile production in Scotland, which was further evidenced in the prizes offered annually by the Board of Trustees. In 1822, these included a prize for ‘fancy muslins for ladies dresses’, won by Thos. Ireland & Co. of Edinburgh; also ‘shawls in imitation of the Indian’, won by James Page and Wellstood & Ogilvie, both of Edinburgh; and ‘designs for table linen’ made of linen damask, all going to named designers based in Dunfermline, including Joseph Neil Paton. The only

Glasgow prize winner that year was Andrew Heriot for ‘cotton cambric in imitation of the French.’²⁹

The history of the Edinburgh drawing school was beset with difficulties regarding the masters selected to run the establishment and the tendency for students to eschew industrial design in favour of fine art. By the 1830s, when government was beginning to take an interest in design for manufacturing, the Edinburgh school taught 40 students annually, free of charge, but the Dunfermline branch at the heart of the damask industry had closed for the want of local sponsorship. A committee of enquiry found that local employers, such as interior designer David Ramsay Hay, who was also a judge at the annual school competitions, struggled to find suitable employees amongst the graduates and ‘in the art classes he judged, he found little originality.’³⁰ Yet the aims of the design school were still valued and there were hopes in the mid 1830s that it might form a model for other more effective bodies elsewhere in Scotland and particularly in Glasgow, which with nearby Paisley was swiftly emerging as the main centre for high quality cotton textile production.³¹ The main reason for investing in a new school, according to James Skene, secretary to the Board of Trustees, was competition from French designers who had ‘better designs and dyes, and also a school in Paris dedicated to teaching the design of shawl patterns’.³² The local mechanics institutes sought to fill the gap with evening classes and in Glasgow, among the annual prizes distributed by the mechanics institute, there was a reward in 1844 for ‘the best essay on the benefits likely to be derived from a School of Design.’³³ The founding of new designs schools in Britain began in earnest in the late 1830s, initially in London, then in the big English manufacturing centres and in

Glasgow and Paisley from the mid 1840s.³⁴ Their aim was to raise the artistic credentials of designers and operatives and increase their numbers as a first step towards addressing French and European superiority, which was a product, according to contemporary opinion, of a different approach to the demarcation of roles in the production process.

A French capitalist employs three or four artists, where in England one artist would supply eight or ten manufacturers. This is exemplified in the process called by the French the '*mise en carte*', or the practical transfer of the pattern to the fabric into which it is to be wrought. It appears that in England the designer of the pattern and the person who applies it to the manufacture are distinct persons. In France, the workman is himself the artist.³⁵

There was also a hope that specialist regional schools would emerge along the same lines as the school for silk weaving in Lyon, shawl design in Paris, watch making and jewellery in Geneva, iron ware in Berlin and lace in Brussels.

The schools of design grew rapidly, with 3,296 students across Britain in 1851 and 31,455 by 1855.³⁶ The Glasgow Government School of Design was an immediate success, with 360 students registered within six months of opening in 1845. At the first prize giving ceremony, held in the Merchant's Hall, there was a public exhibition of drawings submitted for competition and prizes were awarded for chalk drawings, the first prize going to Alexander Wilson, pattern-drawer; for outline drawings, the first prize going to Alexander Craigie, plasterer; for outline drawings by pupils under the age of sixteen, the first prize going to Donald McIntosh, an inker; and for outline drawings by students in the female class, which was awarded jointly to three competitors, none having

a defined occupation.³⁷ Under the direction of the Lord Provost and various local dignitaries, there were ambitions from the outset to form a design library and establish a gallery of paintings, casts and models for the students to use for copying, which mainly came from loans and gifts from local elites.³⁸ By Spring 1846, when the School moved into new purpose-built premises, it was advertising in addition to classes in ‘elementary and outline drawing’ –

Designing suited to Metals, Wood, Stone, Pottery: also to Silk, Wool, Cotton, Paper, and Lace. Painting in Oil, Water, Distemper, Wax, and Frescos.

Perspective. Figure with Anatomy. Architectural Drawing. Modelling from Casts and Original Designs.³⁹

The ‘morning school’ was from 7.00am to 9.00am every weekday and the evening classes were from 8.00pm to 10.00pm. The ‘public classes’ cost 2s per month and the ‘private class’, which ran during the day, cost £1.11s.6d per quarter.

In common with similar bodies elsewhere, the Glasgow School of Design was partly funded by an annual grant of £600 from the state, but most of the income in the first few years was from donations (totalling over £1000 in 1853) and student fees amounting to over £400. Most of the expenditure was on salaries for masters and on the school premises in Ingram Street. There were 785 male students in 1853, mainly undertaking early morning or evening classes in conjunction with employment, though 147 were described as ‘school boys’; and there were 183 female students, most of them described as having ‘no occupation’. The majority of students of both genders were in the fifteen to twenty years age category, with about a quarter in their twenties. Of the employed

male students, the largest group, with 78 individuals, were returned as ‘mechanical engineers’ but the textile industry was also well represented with 6 calico printing engravers, 24 pattern designers, 53 pattern designer apprentices and 13 pattern makers – a group which taken together comprised 15% of the total male employed student body and was matched in numbers by students working as clerks and warehousemen, many doubtless also involved in the textile industry.⁴⁰

The Glasgow and other design schools attracted enormous interest from students and the public and provided an education for large numbers drawn from a wide social range, but the impact on British design improvement was always questioned. Even in the 1840s, before they were fully instituted, public discussion in Glasgow had dwelt on the challenges to be faced in educating manufacturers in the value of good design.⁴¹ In a public lecture on ‘Ornamental Art and Suggestions for its Improvement’ given in Edinburgh in 1857, Charles Heath Wilson, formerly associated with design education in London and then head of the Glasgow School, drew attention to the on-going task at hand–

for some years we have been trying to improve Industrial Design, by educating pattern drawers and artisans in a knowledge of art...but when our disciples pass into the workshop, they have little opportunity of applying the good principles which they have been taught. Good taste and fashion are found to be in antagonism.⁴²

It seems that despite the initial interest from industry, there was frequent complaint that textile manufacturers were unwilling to give their employees the necessary time to attend

classes and improve their skills. In Glasgow this was identified as a particular problem for the part-time students once they had completed their initial training, because the good state of trade in the early 1850s meant they were required to undertake more over-time by employers and because employers were loath to support further training ‘on the ground of their drawing too well, and consequently claiming a higher rate of wages at too early a period of their engagements.’⁴³ Moreover, as numerous commentators observed, for many manufacturers ‘good design’ was unnecessary when ‘the only legitimate standard of taste is the demands of the market.’⁴⁴ In Paisley, where the design school was soon in the doldrums, it was reported that the older, established designers were unwilling to attend classes because their main employment was in adapting French designs, and that they actively blocked opportunities for the younger pattern drawers to improve their skills and career prospects through classes in the school. In both Glasgow and Paisley there were few freelance designers to emerge from the schools, identified as just two in Paisley out of 22 textile related students in 1852 – though ‘one of these has the reputation of being the best designer in that part of the country’ – and one in Glasgow out of 53 students. The Glasgow school did, however, produce three students in 1852 that subsequently based themselves in Dunfermline ‘in trade for themselves.’⁴⁵

Manufacturers in general were criticised by contemporaries because they did not provide financial support for the design schools in their towns and because they continued to favour foreign designs in their own production processes. Twenty years after their first founding, it was noted that state aid for art schools had increased, but public and industry donations had fallen. By the 1860s questions were being raised about the value of the

design schools and government was threatening to withdraw funding. ‘In Manchester and Paisley the manufacturers, we are told, “do not generally recognize the elementary teaching as being of sufficient direct value to themselves to make it worth their while to support it.”’⁴⁶ This analysis, which first appeared in the *London Review* and was widely reproduced in the provincial press, highlighted the continued dependence on foreign textile designers and pointed to one of the on-going problems with the students coming out of the design schools.

The distance and the interval which separate the young student from the pattern designer who can compete with the French artists is too great. Because the results are not immediate, they [the British manufacturers] deny that the school is of benefit to them.

However, the article also suggested that the design schools had had an impact at entry level for young pattern designers at the start of their careers – ‘At Glasgow some of the manufacturers have not employed anybody but pupils of the School of Design for twenty years, yet at Glasgow the subscriptions have fallen to nothing!’⁴⁷ Moreover, by the 1860s Glasgow and Paisley manufacturers of sewed muslin, which was mainly a putting-out industry dominated by the production of ‘baby robes’, also drew largely on designers trained by design schools.⁴⁸ The issue rumbled on for decades as a cause for concern and debate without resolution.

DESIGNER’S careers

In an age when private study and self-improvement were lauded and where there were numerous initiatives to educate industrial workers, the early careers of nineteenth century textile designers were not simply a product of much-criticised design school training. Attendance at schools was supplemented with classes provided by the mechanics institutes and by private study in the libraries attached to the mechanics institutes or founded by local councils for public benefit. Here students could inspect collections of design manuals, some produced in France and access trade publications such as the *Journal of Design and Manufacturers*, which frequently included locally produced designs, such as those of William Stirling & Sons for Turkey red Swiss chintz velvet that featured in the edition for September 1851. According to one knowledgeable commentator, cheap illustrated journals such as the *Penny Magazine* or the *London Illustrated News* – both available in local libraries from the 1840s – revolutionised the artisan's appreciation of the fine and decorative arts.⁴⁹ Students also had access to local museum exhibitions, which were held to have particular relevance for design appreciation⁵⁰ and to the India textile 'museum' or sample collection that was compiled by John Forbes Watson for informing manufacturers of Indian design.⁵¹ Although it is hard to judge the impact of the Forbes Watson initiatives or other displays of oriental textiles, one commentator, reporting the opinion of a Manchester printer and highlighting the dominant role of French designs in the British textile industry, suggested that in this area at least British designers were superior by virtue of access to such collections.

As for the use of museums, he thinks that the French show to the least possible advantage in the class of designing which one would fancy as being most benefited by these – notably by all Eastern designs.⁵²

Botanical drawing classes, often organized through local natural history societies, which flourished in industrial areas, were also popular among trainee textile designers and apprentices.⁵³ This is not surprising when so much British design relied on floral motifs and some of the celebrated early designers in the calico industry, such as London-based William Kilburn (1745-1818), were also noted botanical water-colourists.⁵⁴ Christopher Dresser (1834-1904), Glasgow born and one of the great Victorian industrial designers and writers on design, was also a distinguished botanist.⁵⁵ Surviving textile samples in Scottish pattern books, even for modest items like handkerchiefs, often show highly detailed botanical illustrations based on British wild flowers. [Fig. 2] Glasgow's longest-surviving Turkey red company, Henry Monteith & Co., famed for colourful bandannas, which were exported across the globe, was noted for its floral designs and employed John Buchanan (1819-1898) as foreman in the firm's drawing shop in the 1840s. Buchanan, a native of Levenside in Dunbartonshire, was educated at the local parish school and mechanics institute and apprenticed as a pattern designer for one of the Turkey red companies in the Vale of Leven in his early teens. On completing his apprenticeship he moved to Busby near Glasgow where he worked for Inglis & Wakefield, a firm of calico printers with strong Manchester connections and reputation for good design.⁵⁶ His next post was with Monteiths at Barrowfield where he was encouraged to develop his interest in botany, which he had first studied in Dunbartonshire where there was a flourishing natural history society, and from where he also attended part-time classes at the Glasgow Design School. Buchanan then migrated to New Zealand in 1851, taking a well-worn path among ambitious Scots, where he was employed mainly

as a draftsman, map drawer and botanical collector and artist. His work with the Geological Survey of Otago was exhibited in the New Zealand Exhibition of 1865 and his sketches and findings were published. He secured an appointment to the staff of the Colonial Museum in Wellington, which was founded in the wake of the 1865 exhibition and which is now the National Museum of New Zealand. His work as botanist and botanical artist lives on in museum collections, in his numerous publications and in plants that were named after him.⁵⁷ [Fig 3]

As with Buchanan, it is often only those textile designers who progressed to other careers in the arts (and were successful) that provide us with details of designer's working life. Another who was known for botanical and also landscape painting was W. D. Barker of Manchester, who died in 1888 and of whom it was said -

Mr Barker's early artistic career began at Manchester, as a pupil of the School of Art...He originally exercised his artistic talents as a designer for calico printing and paper hangings, but such was his love for nature that he gave up a lucrative position, as chief designer in a well-known firm of Manchester printers, to follow the more fascinating, if less lucrative, pursuit of landscape art.⁵⁸

Moving from a career in design to one in the fine arts was an ambition for many students in the government design schools and a frequent cause of criticism of the effectiveness of such institutions in the great national project of industrial improvement. As this quote suggests, however, a staff design position in one of the big firms was thought to be more financially rewarding than the uncertainties of the painter's life. But the painter was a gentleman, whilst the staff designer working in industry was always viewed as an artisan.

The area of art that textile designers were most likely to cultivate in the nineteenth century was landscape painting, which was also the area that was most commercially successful, particularly in industrial cities. W. D. Barker specialised in Welsh scenes, which sold well in Manchester and Liverpool. James Docharty (1829-1878) of Glasgow also specialised in landscape painting, though he made considerable investments in his career-development as a pattern designer before giving it up for art. Docharty was born in Bonhill in the Vale of Leven, where his father was employed in one of the local textile firms and where he served an apprenticeship as a pattern designer, before working in Glasgow for calico printers to about 1861. He then went to Paris to further train and work, before returning to Glasgow to set up in business as a pattern drawer on his own account. His considerable commercial success, which was based in part on his French credentials, allowed him to gradually develop his love of painting, which he followed full-time from the mid 1860s, mainly painting scenes from Perthshire and the Clyde for local sale.⁵⁹

Most designers with an interest in painting did not, however, give up their regular source of income from the textile industry and for some it was possible to combine the two and still make a modest name as an artist, taking advantage of local exhibitions and demand for art for decorating homes. In Dunfermline, among the well-paid damask designers, it was probably advantageous to combine design with fine art. This is evident from the fleeting glimpses we have of the career of W. B. Grandison, designer with the firm of John Sheilds & Co. in the 1880s and '90s, who exhibited landscape paintings in local

exhibitions,⁶⁰ as well as his damask designs at trade events such as the Aberdeen Art and Industrial Exhibition of 1884, where he won gold medal in the Ornamental Work category for ‘an original design for a table corner’⁶¹ and at the Edinburgh International Exhibition of 1886, where he won first prize for damask designs.⁶²

Winning prizes and gaining public recognition and prestige within the locality was a feature of the nineteenth-century designer’s career and in Scotland there were numerous short-run exhibitions of manufactured and ornamental goods, often run as Christmas events. The Board of Trustees for the ‘encouragement of Scottish manufacturers’ had for decades held an annual ‘exposition’ in November and December, usually in Edinburgh in the Royal Institution on Princes Street.⁶³ In summer 1842, the year of the penultimate exhibition, they advertised for ‘manufactures of every kind of fabric, pattern drawers, designers and others’ to come forward with goods for display that were ‘remarkable for superiority of fabric, novelty in the application of material, elegance of form or pattern, beauty of design and harmony of colours.’⁶⁴ These events, and similar exhibitions organized by the Society of Arts in Edinburgh, were popular with visiting audiences, as were those in Glasgow, like the ‘Grand Exhibition during the holidays’ [Christmas 1846] in the Glasgow City Hall.⁶⁵ Local exhibitions were attractive to manufacturers but also to local pattern designers, many of them young apprentices who studied part time at the design schools and through successful exhibition could hope to advance their careers. Even after the launch of the international exhibition movement, more modest local events combining art and design remained popular. In Scotland, an Art Manufacture Association for Encouraging the Application of High Art to the Manufacture of Articles

of Utility and Ornament was founded in 1856 in the wake of the Great Exhibition. It had committees in both Edinburgh and Glasgow, with members including a number of local manufacturers, and mounted an annual exhibition in the National Galleries in Edinburgh.⁶⁶ These events included an array of manufactured goods but also designs from skilled practitioners alongside those of students and apprentices. The aim from the outset was to provide students with an avenue for public display that went beyond the exhibitions mounted by the design schools, for according to one committee member -

However interesting the collective exhibition of the efforts of students may be, they never can have either the interest for the public or afford the same chance for improvement to themselves, that is given by an Exhibition like the present, where their work can be compared with those of the masters of their craft.⁶⁷

Dunfermline was not to be outshone in the race to exhibit works of art and manufactures and various individuals there founded the Dunfermline Institute of Fine Art, which held a widely reported tri-annual exhibition from 1883, partly instituted to encourage apprentice designers and art students, ‘for the benefit of design and appreciation of beauty for industry.’⁶⁸

Exhibitions were popular among designers, and ‘show drawings’ can sometimes be identified in Scottish pattern book collections [Fig. 4], but the impact of design exhibition and competitions on the progress of design improvement was problematic. Certainly there were critics of the practice of exhibiting designs for show alone with little connection with the processes of production. One of the most vocal at the close of the century was Lewis Foreman Day (1845-1910) a successful London-based industrial

designer and writer, who worked extensively for the printed calico industry and particularly for the Manchester firm of Turnbull & Stockdale.⁶⁹

The drawings which most deeply interest the workman are working drawings – just the last to be appreciated by the public, because they are the last to be understood. The most admired of show drawings are to us craftsmen comparatively without interest. We recognise the “competition” drawing at once: we see how it was made in order to secure the commission, not with a view to its effect in execution (which is the true and only end of a design), and we do not wonder at the failure of competitions in general...The design that looks like a picture is likely to be at best a reminiscence of something done before: and the more often it has been done the more likely it is to be pictorially successful.

Day went on to observe on the real practices of the serious workman, not the ‘dilettante who is dainty about preserving his drawings’, that is the man who is so intent on his design that he will ‘sacrifice his drawing to it – harden it...for the sake of emphasis, annotate it, patch it, cut it up into pieces to prove it, if need be do anything to make his meaning clear to the work men who come after him.’ But despite this purist view of things, he also acknowledges, as is evident from the illustration here of a design annotated with instructions for engraving, [Fig 5] -

It is only fair to admit that an exhibition of fragmentary and unfinished drawings, soiled, tattered, and torn, as they almost invariably come from the workshop or factory, would make a very poor show.⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

The life and work of celebrity textile designers, who were drawn from the small group of nineteenth-century freelancers, were mostly based in London and who were lauded for their iconic and innovative designs offers little insight to the experience of the large numbers of textile designers who worked in the provinces in industrial cities like Glasgow or Manchester. The textile industry generated a large and complex design enterprise to service its different branches, often drawing on family connections and businesses, and closely networked with a range of local institutions, educational initiatives and exhibition undertakings. These local designers and their employers, along with other interested parties in Scotland, engaged fully in the great public conversation on ‘good design’ and, being close to the actual business of producing textiles, had a pragmatic and practical approach to the subject.

It is not the purpose of this essay to make judgements on whether or not the numerous, mostly unnamed designers and drawers who worked in the nineteenth century Scottish textile industry were producing good design. Certainly, the contemporary view was predominantly one of criticism of all things British and a general lauding of design standards in France or Germany. But it is notable that some observers who were familiar with the textile printing industry in Britain, and who recognized the strength of the industry in its main markets – that is, the production of mid-quality prints or weaves for mainly middle-class consumption – were rather more positive about the character of designers. One of these was Edmund Potter, who had been ‘Reporter to the Jury on

Printed Fabrics, Class 18' for the Great Exhibition of 1851 and had spent his career in the British textile industry – 'I consider the English designers for our medium prints unsurpassed, and better than at any former period.'⁷¹ What was said of England applied equally in Scotland.

¹ C. Boydell, 'Free-lance textile design in the 1930s: An improving prospect?', *Journal of Design History*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1995, pp. 27-42.

² On the relative anonymity of designers, see M. Snodin and J. Styles, *Design and the Decorative Arts. Britain 1500-1900*, V&A Publications, London, 2001.

³ I am grateful to the Royal Society of Edinburgh for funding for this study, which was conducted under their Major Awards in the Arts and Humanities scheme and is based on c.200 pattern books known as the Turkey Red Collection held by the National Museums Scotland, along with business records held at the University of Glasgow Archives and other contemporary sources. For further information on the project and a related online catalogue and exhibition, see www.nms.ac.uk/turkey_red/colouring_the_nation.aspx

⁴ See, P. Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in the Northwest England*, Bolton, 2005, which also provides a bibliography.

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- ⁵ See, S. Tuckett and S. Nenadic, 'Colouring the Nation. A new in-depth study of the Turkey red pattern books in the National Museums of Scotland', *Textile History*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2012, pp. 140-51.
- ⁶ University of Glasgow. Scottish Business Archive GD13/4/4. William Stirling & Sons. Wage book June to October 1845.
- ⁷ On the process of acquiring designs abroad see *Report from the Select Committee on the School of Design*, House of Commons, 27 July 1849. Evidence of J. C. Wakefield pp. 89-98.
- ⁸ *Glasgow Herald*, January 5, 1844.
- ⁹ *Glasgow Herald*, 5 January 1844.
- ¹⁰ *Glasgow Herald*, 19 January 1855.
- ¹¹ *Belfast Newsletter*, 22 June 1895.
- ¹² L. Kriegel, *Grand Designs: Labor, Empire, and the Museum in Victorian Culture*, Duke University Press, Durham & London, 2007.
- ¹³ E. Potter, *Calico Printing as an Art Manufacture. A Lecture Read Before the Society of Arts, April 22 1852*, John Chapman, London, 1852. p.30, p. 54.
- ¹⁴ See, S. Nenadic, 'The small family firm in Victorian Britain', *Business History*, vol. 35, 1993, pp. 86-114.
- ¹⁵ *Glasgow Herald*, 2 December 1868.
- ¹⁶ 'Mr Redgrave's letter on the School of Design, to Lord John Russell. *The Builder* – December, 1846.' *The Edinburgh Review*, April 1847, p. 459.
- ¹⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, 27 October 1863.
- ¹⁸ *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 2 February 1898.

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- ¹⁹ *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 16 April 1874. Obituary. On the Aesthetic Society see, Edinburgh University Library Special Collections, GB237 Coll- 329. Papers of David Ramsay Hay (1798-1866).
- ²⁰ V&A: Joseph Neil Paton. Designs for damask. Museum numbers: 356:1 to 371:2. Prints & Drawings Study Room, level C, case MB2H, shelf DR.
- ²¹ D. Bremner, *The Industries of Scotland: Their Rise, Progress and Present Condition*, Adam & Charles Black, Glasgow, 1869, pp.242-44.
- ²² N. Brown, 'Paton, Sir Joseph Noel (1821-1901), history painter'. *ODNB* online; J. Baxter, 'Paton, Waller Hugh (1828-1895), landscape painter'; *ODNB* online; P. de Montfort, 'Hill [nee Paton], Amelia Robertson (1820-1904) sculptor.' *ODNB* online.
- ²³ V&A: T.179-1987. Linen damask napkin, designed by James Balfour.
- ²⁴ *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 27 June 1862.
- ²⁵ Bremner, *Industries of Scotland* pp.245-6.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.* p.244.
- ²⁷ For the early history of Scottish design schools see, *Report from the Select Committee on the Arts and the Connections with Manufactures*, House of Commons Papers, vol. 1X.1, 1836, pp. 83-95, evidence from James Skene, Secretary to the Board of Trustees and to the Royal Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Scotland.
- ²⁸ F. Irwin, 'Scottish eighteenth-century chintz and its design', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 107:750, September, 1965, pp. 452-458.
- ²⁹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 12 December 1822.
- ³⁰ *Report from the Select Committee on the Arts*. pp. 37-41.

³¹ For an early history and assessment see, G. Wallis, *Schools of Art. Their Constitution, Management etc.* Simpkin, Marshall & Co., London, 1857. Also, Q. Bell, *Design Schools*, Routledge, London, 1960. J. A. Schmicheen, 'Reconsidering the factory. Art-labor, and the schools of design in nineteenth-century Britain', *Design Issues*, vol 6:2 (1990) pp. 58-69.

³² *Report from the Select Committee on the Arts*, p. 80.

³³ *Glasgow Herald*, 20 May 1844.

³⁴ See, Kriegel, *Grand Designs*. Bell, *Design Schools*.

³⁵ *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 25 September 1841, 'Arts of design.'

³⁶ Wallis, *Schools of Art*, p. 21.

³⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, 15 August 1845.

³⁸ *Glasgow Herald*, 25 April 1853.

³⁹ *Glasgow Herald*, 16 January 1846.

⁴⁰ *Glasgow Herald*, 25 April 1853.

⁴¹ *Glasgow Herald*, 28 December 1846, 'Artist's Soiree and Conversazione'. Lecture from Mr Chisholm, pattern drawer.

⁴² C. Heath Wilson, *Remarks on Ornamental Art and Suggestions for its Improvement. A Lecture Delivered in the National Galleries [of Scotland] at the Request of the Committee of Management of the Art Manufacture Association on the Evening of 20 January 1857*, Edmonston & Douglas, Edinburgh, 1857, p. 7.

⁴³ *Glasgow Herald*, 28 February 1852.

⁴⁴ R. Redgrave, *On the Necessity of Principles in Teaching Design*, Chapman Hall, London, 1853, p. 31.

⁴⁵ *Glasgow Herald*, 28 February 1852.

⁴⁶ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 October 1864.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Bremner, *Industries of Scotland* pp. 305-311.

⁴⁹ Potter, *Calico Printing*, p. 60.

⁵⁰ See, for instance, E. Forbes, *On the Educational Uses of Museums*, London, 1853. E. Solly, *Trade Museums, Their Nature and Uses*, Longman, Brown & Green, London, 1853.

⁵¹ F. Driver and S. Ashmore, 'The mobile museum. Collecting and circulating Indian textiles in Victorian Britain', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2010, pp. 353-384.

⁵² *Liverpool Mercury*, 20 February 1882.

⁵³ On contemporary notions of formal design training including copying from nature, see R. Redgrave, *On the Necessity of Principles in Teaching Design*, Chapman Hall, London, 1853.

⁵⁴ A. Christie, 'A taste for seaweed: William Kilburn's late eighteenth century designs for printed cottons', *Journal of Design History*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2011, pp. 299-314.

⁵⁵ See, C. Dresser, 'Botany, as adapted to arts and art-manufacture', *Journal of the Society of Arts*, London, 1857.

⁵⁶ Sykas, *Secret Life of Textiles*, p. XXX states that Inglis & Wakefield registered more of its designs for copyright than any other firm in Scotland. It was also consulted in Parliamentary enquiries on the issue of design education and copyright.

⁵⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, 5 December 1898. N. M. Adams, 'Buchanan, John – Biography.' *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (online). Accessed 6 August 2013.

www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b42/buchanan-john

⁵⁸ *Liverpool Mercury*, 24 September 1888.

⁵⁹ *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 8 April 1878.

⁶⁰ *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 13 July 1888.

⁶¹ *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 13 December 1884.

⁶² *Glasgow Herald*, 22 October 1886.

⁶³ A. Christie, *The Objects and Purposes of the Art Manufacture Association in Forming the Exhibition. A Lecture Delivered in the National Galleries [of Scotland] at the Request of the Committee of Management of the Art Manufacture Association on the Evening of Friday 23 January 1857*, Edmunston & Douglas, Edinburgh, 1857, p. 5.

⁶⁴ *Scotsman*, 30 July 1842.

⁶⁵ *Glasgow Herald*, 21 December 1846

⁶⁶ See, G. Wilson, *The Relation of Ornamental to Industrial Art. A Lecture Delivered in the National Galleries at the Request of the Art Manufacture Association on Christmas Eve 1856*, Edmonston & Douglas, Edinburgh, 1857.

⁶⁷ Christie, *Objects and Purposes*, p. 17.

⁶⁸ *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 3 December 1883.

⁶⁹ L. H. Armstrong, 'The progress of the industrial arts. No. 3. Chintzes and cretonnes', *Art Journal*, April 1891, pp.108-113.

⁷⁰ L. F. Day, 'Of designs and working drawing.' *Arts and Crafts Essays by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society*, London, 1893.

⁷¹ Potter, *Calico Printing*, p. 54.